

Message Text

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73

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02

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R 231736Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8276

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT CO

SUBJ: DISTURBANCE AT NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

REF: BOGOTA 3657

1. ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 18, STUDENTS, MOSTLY FROM BOGOTA'S LARGE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, DEMONSTRATED IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY TO COMMEMORATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATHS OF TWO STUDENTS KILLED BY POLICE IN DISORDERS LAST YEAR. ELEMENTS OF THE GROUP, JOINED BY HANGERS-ON, LATER GATHERED AT THE EDGE OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY AND BLOCKED TRAFFIC ON A MAIN THOROUGHFARE. BY EARLY AFTERNOON, THE CROWD OF APPROXIMATELY 2000 BECAME AN UNRULY MOB AND SEIZED AND BURNED SEVERAL VEHICLES, INCLUDING A CAR DRIVEN BY THE PAPAL NUNCIO. NO INJURIES WERE REPORTED, BUT THE VEHICLES WERE TOTALLY DESTROYED.

2. THE CAR BURNING WAS THIS SEMESTER'S FIRST OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE ASSOCIATED WITH THE VOLATILE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY AND HAS BEEN WIDELY CONDEMNED BY THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FIGURES, MAINLY DUE TO THE ATTACK ON THE NUNCIO'S CAR. THE NUNCIO HIMSELF HAS ALREADY PUBLICLY FORGIVEN THOSE RESPONSIBLE, BUT ON APRIL 22 THE BOGOTA PRESS REPORTED A FORMAL CONDEMNATION BY THE VATICAN. FRONT PAGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ARTICLES CONTINUE TO KEEP THE ISSUE ALIVE AND ACCUSING FINGERS

ARE BEING POINTED AT BOTH THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT FOR FOMENTING THE VIOLENCE.

3. IN THE LONG VIEW, HOWEVER, THE INCIDENT, THOUGH DRAMATIC BECAUSE OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE PAPAL NUNCIO, SHOULD NOT HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS NOR SHOULD IT CREATE A SNOWBALL EFFECT. STUDENT ELECTIONS AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 23 HAVE HOWEVER BEEN POSTPONED FOR A MONTH, BUT THESE HAD BEEN PLANNED AND POSTPONED TWICE ALREADY. OTHER UNIVERSITIES ARE NOW ENTERING THE COUNT-DOWN TO FINAL EXAMS AND STUDENTS ARE CONCERNING ON STUDIES. AN EARLIER STRIKE AT BOGOTA'S JORGE TADEO LOZANO UNIVERSITY, RESULTING FROM PURELY INTERNAL PROBLEMS, WAS SETTLED MORE THAN A WEEK EARLIER AND STUDENTS THERE ARE CONCERNED WITH MAKING UP FOR LOST TIME. MORE IMPORTANTLY, POLICE ON THE SCENE OF THE CAR BURNINGS EXHIBITED RESTRAINT AND GAVE NO CAUSE FOR THE USUAL STUDENT RALLYING CRY OF POLICE BRUTALITY. BY APRIL 21 QUITE HAD ALREADY RETURNED TO THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CAMPUS.

4. COMMENT: PROBABLY THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EFFECT OF THE CAR BURNINGS IS THE DAMAGE TO THE PRESTIGE AND AUTHORITY OF THE MARXIST RECTOR OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, LUIS CARLOS PEREZ, WHO HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL UP TO THE APRIL 18 INCIDENT IN KEEPING THE STUDENT BODY TURNED AWAY FROM ITS TRADITIONAL PROPENSITY FOR POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE. PREVIOUS TO THE INCIDENT, PEREZ WAS ALREADY REPORTED TO HAVE HAD DIFFICULTY PLEASING ANYONE AS A RESULT OF HIS ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNIVERSITY. THE EXTREME LEFT DERIDED HIM FOR NOT BEING RADICAL ENOUGH, THE RIGHT FOUND HIS MARXISM UNACCEPTABLE, AND THERE WAS ANGER OVER RUMORS TO THE EFFECT THAT HE EMPLOYED IDEOLOGICAL CRITERIA IN THE HIRING OF PROFESSORS. NOW HE IS BEING ATTACKED, ESPECIALLY BY THE RIGHT, FOR ALLOWING RADICAL STUDENTS TO RUN OUT OF CONTROL. IN RESPONSE TO THE CAR BURNINGS, WHICH FOLLOWED AN EARLIER TEAR-GAS BOMBING OF A UNIVERSITY-SPONSORED CONCERT (BOGOTA 3340), THE RECTOR MADE A STRONG STATEMENT CHIDING THE "SILENT MAJORITY" OF STUDENTS AND PROFESSORS FOR NOT PREVENTING THE VIOLENCE AND ANARCHY OF A MINORITY. PEREZ THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT IF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION ARE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE, HE WILL HAVE NO CHOICE EXCEPT RESIGNATION. IN VIEW OF THE HISTORY OF PERIODIC VIOLENT OUTBREAKS BY STUDENTS AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, PEREZ HAS LEFT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIMSELF WITH LITTLE ROOM FOR FUTURE MANEUVERING.
VAKY

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Message Attributes

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